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Commission on Population and Development

Report on the fiftieth session (15 April 2016 and 3-7 April 2017)

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Note

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

Summary

The fiftieth session of the Commission on Population and Development was held at United Nations Headquarters on 15 April 2016 and from 3 to 7 April 2017. Its special theme was "Changing population age structures and sustainable development". Opening statements were made by the Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations on behalf of the Secretary-General, by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, by the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and by the Director of the Population Division in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Following these statements, the Commission commemorated the 50th session, taking place 70 years after the first session of the Population Commission in 1947, by showing a video featuring interviews with persons familiar with the Commission's history, including current and former staff of the United Nations, the current and one former Chair of the Commission, and other representatives of Member States, non-governmental organizations and academia.

The Commission considered four reports of the Secretary-General. The report of the Secretary-General on changing population age structures and sustainable development (E/CN.9/2017/2), prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, provides an overview of changes in the age distribution of populations that are taking place both globally and across a wide range of countries and regions. Although the transition towards longer lives and smaller families is universal, its speed and timing vary greatly across countries and regions. The proportion of children and youth in the world is slowly declining, while that of older persons is rising. While Europe is currently the oldest region and Africa the youngest, all countries are undergoing a similar demographic transition leading, eventually, to an age distribution that is much older than in the past.

Such changes, which are influenced by various social and economic factors, have important implications for sustainable development. The failure to account for and adapt to changes in a population's age structure can exacerbate existing gaps in development, especially when the shift in population over time is toward age groups that lack access to essential services and social protection. Countries with growing populations of young people must find ways to provide education and employment opportunities for youth or risk forfeiting some portion of their potential contribution toward national development.

Because of population ageing, the number of persons requiring extended care due to disability or functional limitation is likely to increase in all countries. National health systems should promote healthy lifestyles and provide quality care throughout the life course. Governments and other stakeholders should support family caregivers while also providing options for community-based and institutional care when needed. Countries unprepared for the challenge of population ageing will face difficulties in managing its fiscal impacts on public support systems for older persons.

The report of the Secretary-General on the monitoring of population programmes, focusing on changing population age structures and sustainable development, in the context of the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (E/CN.9/2017/3) was prepared by the United Nations Population Fund. The report provides examples of policies and programmes that countries have developed and implemented to address the challenges and harness the opportunities of changing age structures, including policies that can help to unlock the potential for increased economic output

and productivity associated with changes in the age distribution — often called the demographic dividend. Investing in the human capital of the population, including by promoting sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights and gender equality, is necessary to eliminate barriers to poverty eradication. Without such investments, individuals and communities may be unable to realize their full potential. With good data and effective research, accompanied by the sharing of experiences across countries and proactive policies and programmes, successful adaptation to age structure changes can be a critical part of an overall strategy for eradicating poverty and achieving prosperity and sustainable development.

The report of the Secretary-General on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (E/CN.9/2017/4), prepared by the United Nations Population Fund, reviews trends over time in funding from both external donors and domestic sources. Official development assistance remains critical for supporting sexual and reproductive health programmes, especially for least developed countries. Reliable data on resource flows are essential for successful advocacy. Given the evolution of financial assistance for sexual and reproductive health, there is a need to explore new data sources and to review the methods being used to achieve greater specificity. It is also critical to explore the possibility of achieving the objectives of this work through other mechanisms, such as the national health accounts.

The report of the Secretary-General on programme implementation and progress of work in the field of population in 2016 (E/CN.9/2017/5) and the draft programme of work for 2018-2019 (E/CN.9/2017/CRP.1) show the progress made by the Population Division in implementing its programme of work, as well as the existing plans for its future work. The Division has continued to strengthen the demographic evidence base through its analytical reports, global datasets and other publications, and through its capacity-building activities. It has also contributed to the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda, including through the production of Sustainable Development Goal indicators, and has supported intergovernmental processes in the Commission on Population and Development and the General Assembly.

Member States reaffirmed, in their statements throughout the session, their support for the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and recounted their experiences of implementation. Many emphasized that the full implementation of the Programme of Action would be critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and stressed the importance of taking population trends, including changing age structures, into account in their development planning. Falling levels of fertility, leading to increasing proportions of the population in the working age range, were opening a demographic window of opportunity. Speakers highlighted the necessity of investing in human capital, especially for youth, through policies and programmes to improve access to education and health. To benefit from that investment, it was important to ensure the availability of employment opportunities, especially for youth. Speakers also drew attention to the reproductive health needs of youth, including for the prevention of adolescent pregnancy, and called for an end to child and early marriage, violence against youth and gender-based violence.

At the same time, countries described the policies and programmes they were implementing to address the health, welfare and inclusion of growing populations of older persons. To promote active ageing, countries need to ensure that continued participation in the labour force and society at large remains an option at older ages. An ageing population also requires attending to the long-term sustainability of social

security and pension systems, which may require adjustments, for example in the age of eligibility for full benefits.

On Monday, 3 April, the Commission heard a keynote address on "Changing age structures and sustainable development in youthful societies" by Eliya Zulu, Executive Director of the African Institute for Development Policy in Nairobi. Mr. Zulu noted that the share of people in each age group affects development needs and policies. If countries achieved a substantial reduction in fertility, there would be fewer dependent children requiring support, while the population at working ages would continue to grow. This shift in age structure could usher in a period of rapid economic growth, known as the "demographic dividend".

On Tuesday, 4 April, Rania Antonopoulos, Director of the Gender Equality and the Economy programme at the Levy Economics Institute and currently Alternate Minister of Labour in the Government of Greece, delivered a keynote address on the theme "Changes in age structure and sustainable development in ageing societies". She emphasized the importance of macroeconomic policies to provide employment opportunities for youth and younger adults, especially in countries where the concentration of population in the working age range is creating an opportunity to benefit from a demographic dividend. In ageing societies, fostering robust public pension and health-care systems is important. Countries should formulate policies to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration, recognizing that, in developed countries, international migration can help to avoid extreme scenarios of population ageing. Similarly, countries can reduce the pace of population ageing by facilitating higher fertility through family support programmes. The speaker also stressed the importance of women's participation in the labour force and drew attention to the need to transform women's unpaid work into paid work to ensure their equitable access to social security and thus promote women's empowerment.

On Wednesday, 5 April, the Commission heard a series of national voluntary presentations coupled with a panel discussion and interactive debate on topics related to the implementation of the Programme of Action, with an emphasis on changing population age structures and sustainable development. The following countries made national presentations (in order of presentation): China, Finland, Ghana, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines and the Sudan. All presenters highlighted recent demographic trends and current policy approaches for addressing changing population age structures. The demographic transition is at different stages in these countries, especially regarding fertility levels. Most countries have implemented national strategies to improve access to modern methods of contraception. Inequality is a major concern, as economic growth has not benefitted all parts of the population equally.

The national presentations acknowledged that there was a relatively short window of time to benefit from the demographic dividend made possible by the fall in fertility and the resulting concentration of population in the working age range. They recognized that countries need to plan ahead to accommodate changes in the age distribution. The expert panellists, responding to the presentations, noted common themes, including the need to invest in youth and human capital. The importance of preventing early marriage and adolescent childbearing was also highlighted. Panellists pointed to the value of countries learning from one another and sharing experiences of both success and failure in policymaking and implementation.

It was the first time that the Commission had provided an opportunity for Member States to make national voluntary presentations. This segment of the annual session allowed Member States to present their national experiences of

implementation in greater depth and to benefit from the commentaries provided by the expert panellists. The format was conducive to an interactive discussion among various participants in the annual session.

Approximately 160 representatives of non-governmental organizations from more than 65 distinct organizations accredited with the Economic and Social Council — out of roughly 600 who had pre-registered — participated in the annual session. A total of 19 statements on behalf of individual organizations or groups of non-governmental organizations had been submitted well in advance and became official documents of the session. In addition, 16 representatives of non-governmental organizations delivered oral statements from the floor.

At the request of the Chair, the informal consultations were led by two of the Vice-Chairs, Nicola Barker-Murphy (Jamaica) and Eleonora van Munster (Netherlands). Over the course of the informal consultations, the Chair also designated Mustapha Kamal Rosdi (Malaysia) to serve as an additional facilitator.

The major outcomes of the fiftieth session of the Commission were three decisions. The Commission decided on special themes for its fifty-first session, to be held in 2018 ("Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration"), and its fifty-second session, to be held in 2019 ("Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Commission also approved the provisional agenda for its fifty-first session.

Two of the decisions are proposals for action by the Economic and Social Council. Following up on the review of the Commission's methods of work in 2016, the draft decision on the Commission's multi-year programme of work calls for adopting a four-year cycle for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The quadrennial review would be part of a multi-year work programme aligned with the main theme of the Council and with the thematic focus of the high-level political forum meeting under the auspices of the Council. In its draft decision on the report of the Secretary-General on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the further implementation of the Programme of Action, the Commission proposed that UNFPA be requested to provide information on a potential revision of the methods, categories and data sources used in preparing the report, to be accompanied by technical recommendations on its future scope, format and periodicity. The Commission would review these recommendations at its fifty-first session.

The Commission's deliberations on the special theme of the fiftieth session provided an opportunity for the Commission to link the objectives of the Programme of Action to the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda by focusing on changing population age structures in the context of sustainable development. The most relevant of the Sustainable Development Goals in this discussion were Goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 17. The Chair's summary of the discussion on the draft resolution on the theme appears later in the present report.

Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention	8
	A. Draft decisions for adoption by the Council	8
	B. Matters brought to the attention of the Council	10
II.	General debate: (a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels; (b) Special theme of the fiftieth session of the Commission based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation	13
III.	Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population	17
IV.	Provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission	18
V.	Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fiftieth session	19
VI.	Organization of the session	20
	A. Opening, closing and duration of the session	20
	B. Attendance	20
	C. Election of officers	20
	D. Agenda	20
	E. Documentation	21

Chapter I

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

A. Draft decisions for adoption by the Council

1. The Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decisions:

Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its fiftieth session and provisional agenda for its fifty-first session*

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Takes note of the report of the Commission on Population and Development on its fiftieth session;[1]

(b) Approves the provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission as set out below:

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.[2]
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

Documentation

Provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission

Note by the Secretariat on the organization of the work of the session

3. General debate:
   (a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels;
   (b) Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

Report of the Secretary-General on the monitoring of population programmes, focusing on sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

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* For the discussion, see chap. V.

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2017, Supplement No. 5* (E/2017/25).

[2] In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2005/213 of 31 March 2005, the Commission, immediately following the close of its fiftieth session, held the first meeting of its fifty-first session for the sole purpose of electing the new Chair and other members of the Bureau, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council.

Report of the Secretary-General on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

4. Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on world demographic trends

Report of the Secretary-General on programme implementation and progress of work in the field of population in 2017: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Note by the Secretary-General on the proposed strategic framework for the period 2020-2021: subprogramme 5, Population, of programme 7, Economic and social affairs

5. Provisional agenda for the fifty-second session of the Commission.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat containing the provisional agenda for the fifty-second session of the Commission

6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-first session.

Report on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

The Economic and Social Council,

(a) Recalling General Assembly resolution 49/128 of 19 December 1994, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare periodic reports for the substantive sessions of the Economic and Social Council on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the implementation of the Programme of Action and to promote the exchange of information on the requirements for international assistance among the members of the donor community,

(b) Recalling also its resolution 1995/55 of 28 July 1995, in which it endorsed the terms of reference proposed by the Commission on Population and Development in the report on its twenty-eighth session,[3] which include reviewing on a regular basis the flow of financial resources and the funding mechanisms to achieve the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action,

(c) Recalling further its resolution 2016/25 of 27 July 2016 on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development,

Decides to request the United Nations Population Fund, in consultation with the Secretariat, to provide, in the context of the report on the flow of financial resources submitted to the fifty-first session in 2018, a minimum of 45 days prior to the commencement of the session, information on a potential revision of the methods, categories and data sources used as the basis for preparing this report, with technical recommendations on, inter alia, the future scope, format and periodicity of the report; and the Commission on Population and Development shall review the technical recommendations at its fifty-first session.

[3] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 7* (E/1995/27).

Multi-year work programme of the Commission on Population and Development, including the cycle for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolution 2016/25 of 27 July 2016 and its decision 2017/208 of 23 November 2016, as well as General Assembly resolution 70/299 of 29 July 2016,

(a) Decides that, starting with its fifty-third session in 2020, the Commission on Population and Development shall adopt a four-year cycle for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as part of a multi-year work programme aligned with the main theme of the Economic and Social Council and with the thematic focus of the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Council;

(b) Affirms that the Commission, according to its mandate pertaining to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, taking into account the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and their interlinkages, will contribute to the thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals taking place at the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(c) Decides that the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Population Fund will collaborate to provide technical support to the Bureau of the Commission, on the basis of their respective complementary roles, in order to support the efficient work of the Commission, throughout the cycle for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

B. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

2. The following decisions adopted by the Commission and the Chair's summary of the discussion on the draft resolution on the special theme are brought to the attention of the Council:

Decision 2017/101
Special themes for the Commission on Population and Development in 2018 and 2019

The Commission on Population and Development decides:

(a) That the special theme for its fifty-first session in 2018 shall be "Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration";

(b) That the special theme for its fifty-second session in 2019 shall be "Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

Decision 2017/102
Documents considered by the Commission on Population and Development at its fiftieth session**

The Commission on Population and Development takes note of the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General entitled "Programme implementation and progress of work in the field of population in 2016: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs";[5]

(b) Note by the Secretariat on the draft programme of work of the Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for the period 2018-2019.[6]

Chair's summary of the discussion on the draft resolution on changing population age structures and sustainable development

Delegations at the fiftieth session of the Commission on Population and Development undertook extensive informal consultations on a range of issues related to the special theme of the session, "Changing population age structures and sustainable development". The starting point of these consultations was an initial draft resolution released by the Chair and distributed on Wednesday, 8 March. Negotiations began three weeks later, on 29 March, and concluded on Friday, 7 April, the last day of the session. The negotiations were fully transparent, with a timing and format that allowed all interested delegations to participate. Since it was not possible to reach consensus on all issues, the draft resolution was not adopted. Instead, the Chair withdrew her proposal and received authorization from the Commission to prepare this summary of the deliberations.

After the completion of two full readings of the draft resolution, the co-facilitators presented a streamlined text on Thursday morning, 6 April, for further consideration by delegations. The proposal from the co-facilitators included paragraphs on selected topics submitted by groups of delegations, who had worked to consolidate the various pieces of proposed text on each topic and to provide shortened versions as inputs to the co-facilitators' proposed text. Consultations continued into the evening of 6 April. From that point on, the Chair, with support from the co-facilitators, other Bureau members, the Secretariat and UNFPA, led the preparation of a Chair's text, which was distributed to all delegates on the morning of Friday, 7 April. There were further consultations and two subsequent proposed revisions of the Chair's text during the day on Friday.

Areas of general agreement included references to the demographic transition as the driver of changing population age structures and the relevance of such changes to various aspects of sustainable development. Delegations highlighted the importance of supporting investments in education and health, including for sexual and reproductive health, and of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in order to realize fully the potential economic benefits of changing population age structures, known as the "demographic dividend", and to promote sustainable development in general.

There was widespread support for promoting and protecting the human rights of all migrants and for facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, recognizing that international migration tends to make the populations of host societies younger and thus attenuates the speed and impact of population ageing. The role of family-centred policies and the implications of changing age structures for climate-related

** For the discussion, see chap. III.
[5] E/CN.9/2017/3.
[6] E/CN.9/2017/CRP.1.

vulnerabilities were acknowledged. Children, adolescents and youth, as well as older persons, were identified as age groups that merited priority attention.

There was strong support for promoting the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by age, sex and other relevant characteristics to assist in the design and implementation of appropriate policies. Delegations were in agreement about calling upon UNFPA to continue to assist countries in achieving the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and about requesting the Secretary-General to continue his substantive work on population issues, including on the interactions between changing population age structures and sustainable development.

Issues surrounding sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights were again among the most contentious in discussions within the Commission. Delegations disagreed about the meaning of these terms and whether their use required qualification. For example, there was disagreement about whether these terms should be qualified by adding "in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action". This proposal was supported by some delegations but unacceptable to others, and thus there was no agreement. Regarding sexuality education, the Chair's text qualified the reference to comprehensive sexuality education by specifying that such education should be "age-appropriate". Delegations still disagreed about the use of the phrase "comprehensive education on human sexuality". There were calls to delete the word "comprehensive" or the entire phrase. These proposals were unacceptable to some delegations, and thus there was no agreement.

At the final plenary meeting on late Friday afternoon, 7 April, the Chair informed the Commission that, despite the sincere efforts of all involved, no consensus had been achieved on the final version of the Chair's text. Upon the withdrawal of her proposal, the Commission authorized the Chair to prepare a summary of the discussion on the draft resolution, which would be referenced in the report on the fiftieth session and posted on the Commission's website. In their closing statements, many delegations emphasized the need to build on and maintain the spirit of solidarity and consensus for which the Commission is known and expressed their commitment to strive for a consensus outcome in future sessions.

Chapter II

General debate:
(a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels
(b) Special theme of the fiftieth session of the Commission[1] based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation

3. The Commission held a general discussion on item 3 of its agenda, "General debate: (a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels; (b) Special theme of the fiftieth session of the Commission based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation", at its 2nd to 7th meetings, from 3 to 6 April 2017. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on changing population age structures and sustainable development (E/CN.9/2017/2);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the monitoring of population programmes, focusing on changing population age structures and sustainable development, in the context of the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (E/CN.9/2017/3);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (E/CN.9/2017/4).

4. It also had before it a number of statements submitted by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (E/CN.9/2017/NGO/1-19).

5. At the 2nd and 3rd meeting, on 3 April, introductory statements were made by the Chief of the Demographic Analysis Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Technical Specialist of the Population and Development Branch of the United Nations Population Fund, and the Chief of the Population and Development Branch.

6. At its 2nd meeting, on 3 April, the Commission heard statements by the representatives of Bangladesh (on behalf of the least developed countries) and Qatar, as well as the observers of Ecuador (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Malta (on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia) and El Salvador (on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States).

7. At its 3rd meeting, on 3 April, the Commission heard statements by the representatives of China, Qatar (on behalf of the Arab Group), Belarus, Chile, Bangladesh, Mexico, the Philippines, Argentina, Peru, Madagascar, Israel, the Netherlands, Jamaica, South Africa, Finland, Pakistan and Sierra Leone, as well as

[1] Changing population age structures and sustainable development.

by the observers of the Niger, Nicaragua, France, El Salvador, Mongolia, Guatemala, India, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Paraguay and Japan.

8. At its 4th meeting, on 4 April, the Commission heard statements by the representatives of Nigeria, Brazil, the United States of America, Denmark, the Sudan, Belgium, Uruguay, Switzerland, Zambia, the Republic of Moldova and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as by the observers of Australia, Panama, Swaziland, Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Sri Lanka, Canada, Malawi and Cuba.

9. At its 5th meeting, on 5 April, the Commission heard statements by the representatives of Malaysia, Germany, Morocco, the Russian Federation, Romania, Burundi, Benin and Uganda, as well as by the observers of Egypt, Sweden, Kenya, Thailand, Norway, Colombia, Jordan, Poland, Cabo Verde, Myanmar, Togo, the Syrian Arab Republic, Djibouti, Nepal, Nauru, Maldives, Azerbaijan, the Gambia, Cambodia, Suriname and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the Holy See.

10. At its 7th meeting, on 6 April, statements were made by the representative of the Dominican Republic, as well as by the observers of Lebanon, Tunisia and the Observer State of Palestine. Statements were also made by the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic Commission for Africa, the World Health Organization, Partners in Population and Development, the World Tourism Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the League of Arab States, the International Labour Organization, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

11. At the 7th meeting, on 6 April, statements were also made by the representatives of the International Catholic Committee of Nurses and Medico-Social Assistants, C-Fam, the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Education Fund, the New Zealand Family Planning Association and the Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, Stichting dance4life, the International Federation of Medical Students Associations, the International Federation for Family Development, the International Federation on Ageing, Help Me See, FEMM Foundation, World Youth Alliance, Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Amnesty International.

Keynote addresses and panel discussions

12. At its 2nd meeting, on 3 April, the Commission heard a keynote statement on "Changing age structures and sustainable development in youthful societies" by Eliya Zulu, Director of the African Institute for Development Policy in Nairobi. Mr. Zulu pointed to the relevance of the population age distribution for sustainable development. He noted that the share of people in each age group affected development needs and policies. If countries achieved a substantial reduction in fertility, there would be fewer dependent children requiring support, while the working age population would continue to grow. This shift in the age structure could usher in a period of rapid economic growth, a phenomenon known as the "demographic dividend".

13. At its 4th meeting, on 4 April, the Commission heard a keynote statement on "Changes in age structure and sustainable development in ageing societies" by Rania Antonopoulos, Director of the Gender Equality and the Economy programme at the Levy Economics Institute and (since January 2015) Alternate Minister of Labour in the Government of Greece. She emphasized the importance of

macroeconomic policies to provide employment opportunities for younger people in countries in which the concentration of population in the working age range created an opportunity to benefit from a demographic dividend. In ageing societies, she emphasized the importance of fostering robust public pension and health-care systems. Ms. Antonopoulos recommended that developed countries formulate policies to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration and to encourage higher fertility by supporting families with children, as means of avoiding the extremes of population ageing. The speaker also stressed the importance of women's participation in the labour force and the need to transform women's unpaid work into paid work to ensure their access to social security.

14. At its 6th meeting, on 5 April, the Commission heard a series of national voluntary presentations coupled with a panel discussion and interactive debate, moderated by William Miller of Global Connections Television, on topics related to the implementation of the Programme of Action, with an emphasis on changing population age structures and sustainable development. The following panellists participated in the discussion: Agnieszka Chłoń-Domińczak, Assistant Professor at the Warsaw School of Economics and Educational Research Institute, Warsaw, and former Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy; Youssef Courbage, Research Director, Institut national d'études démographiques, Paris; Edith Esinam Asamani, Project Leader, Ghana Adolescent Reproductive Health project, at Hope For Future Generations; and Rafael Rofman, World Bank Program Leader for Education, Health, Social Protection and Labour, and Poverty, Buenos Aires. The representatives of the following countries made voluntary presentations: China, Ghana, Indonesia, the Philippines, the Sudan, Finland, Mexico and Norway.

15. All the presenters highlighted recent demographic trends and current policy approaches to address changing population age structures. The demographic transition was at different stages in these countries, especially with regard to fertility levels. Most countries had implemented national strategies to improve access to modern methods of contraception. Inequality was a major concern, as economic growth had not benefitted all parts of the population equally. The presenters acknowledged that there was a relatively short window of time in which to benefit from the demographic dividend made possible by the fall in fertility and the resulting concentration of population in the working age range. They recognized that countries must plan ahead to accommodate changes in the age distribution. The expert panellists, responding to the presentations, noted common themes, including the need to invest in youth and human capital. The prevention of early marriage and adolescent childbearing were also highlighted. Panellists pointed to the value of countries learning from one another and sharing experiences of both success and failure in policymaking and implementation. Representatives of the following countries participated in the interactive discussion: Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, Liberia, Cuba, Uganda, Nigeria and Mexico.

Action taken by the Commission

Special themes for the Commission on Population and Development in 2018 and 2019

16. At its 8th meeting, on 7 April, the Commission had before it a draft decision entitled "Special themes for the Commission on Population and Development in 2018 and 2019" (E/CN.9/2017/L.4), submitted by the Chair on the basis of informal consultations. The Commission adopted the draft decision (see chap. I, sect. B, decision 2017/101).

17. At the same meeting, before the closing of the session, one of the co-facilitators of the informal consultations, Eleonora van Munster (Netherlands), made a statement. Statements were made by the representatives of the United States of America, Nigeria (on behalf of the Group of African States), Finland, Mexico, South Africa, China, the Russian Federation, Argentina, the Philippines and Jamaica (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), as well as by the observers of France (on behalf of a group of 30 States), Tunisia and Indonesia. The observers of the State of Palestine (on behalf of the Group of Arab States) and the Holy See also made statements.

Chapter III

Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population

18. The Commission held a general discussion on item 4 of its agenda, "Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population", at its 7th meeting, on 6 April 2017. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on programme implementation and progress of work in the field of population in 2016: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (E/CN.9/2017/5);

(b) Note by the Secretariat on the draft programme of work of the Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for the period 2018-2019 (E/CN.9/2017/CRP.1).

19. At the same meeting, the Commission heard an introductory statement by the Senior Population Affairs Officer, Office of the Director, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

20. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Germany and Japan.

Action taken by the Commission

Documents considered by the Commission under agenda item 4

21. At its 8th meeting, on 7 April, on the proposal of the Chair, the Commission took note of two documents submitted under agenda item 4 (see chap. I, sect. B, decision 2017/102).

Chapter IV

Provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission

22. At its 8th meeting, on 7 April 2017, the Commission had before it the provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission (E/CN.9/2017/L.2).

23. At the same meeting, the Commission approved the provisional agenda, as revised (see chap. I, sect. A).

Chapter V

Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fiftieth session

24. At its 8th meeting, on 7 April 2017, the Commission adopted the draft report on its fiftieth session (E/CN.9/2017/L.3) and authorized the Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, Cristina Popescu (Romania), to finalize the document in consultation with the Secretariat.

Chapter VI
Organization of the session

A. Opening, closing and duration of the session

25. The Commission on Population and Development held its fiftieth session at United Nations Headquarters on 15 April 2016 and from 3 to 7 April 2017. The Commission held eight meetings (1st to 8th).

26. At the 2nd meeting, on 3 April 2017, the session was opened by the Chair of the Commission, Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani (Qatar), who made a statement.

27. At the same meeting, the Commission heard statements by the Chef de Cabinet (on behalf of the Secretary-General), the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund and the Director of the Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

28. During the closing of the session, at the 8th meeting, on 7 April 2017, the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund and the Chair of the fiftieth session made statements.

B. Attendance

29. The session was attended by 46 States members of the Commission. Observers for 73 other States Members of the United Nations and 2 non-Member States, representatives of organizations and other entities of the United Nations system and observers for intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations also attended.[7] The list of delegations is available in document E/CN.9/2017/INF/1.

C. Election of officers

30. At its 1st and 2nd meetings, on 15 April 2016 and 3 April 2017, the Commission elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chair:

Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani (Qatar)

Vice-Chairs:

Lewis G. Brown (Liberia)
Cristina Popescu (Romania)
Nicola Barker-Murphy (Jamaica)
Eleonora van Munster (Netherlands)

31. At its 2nd meeting, on 3 April, the Commission designated the Vice-Chair, Cristina Popescu (Romania), to serve also as Rapporteur for the session.

D. Agenda

32. At its 2nd meeting, the Commission adopted the provisional agenda (E/CN.9/2017/1), which read:

[7] Only non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and accredited to the fiftieth session of the Commission were permitted to participate.

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. General debate:

   (a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels;

   (b) Special theme of the fiftieth session of the Commission based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation.

4. Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population.

5. Provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission.

6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fiftieth session.

33. At the same meeting, the Commission approved the organization of work of the session (E/CN.9/2017/L.1).

E. Documentation

34. The list of documents before the Commission at its fiftieth session is available from the website of the Population Division (https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/commission/sessions/2017/index.shtml).

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